

## Fourth Judicial District (MN)

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<b>Source:</b>	Executive Committee
<b>Category:</b>	Best Practices and Procedures
<b>Title:</b>	Court Record Project

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<b>Effective Date:</b>	October 11, 2006
<b>Revision Date(s):</b>	
<b>Supersedes:</b>	

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### Court Record Project

#### IMPORTANT POINTS TO REMEMBER WHEN USING DIGITAL RECORDING:

- We ask that Judges “police” their courtroom proceedings. It is not an instant process for the court reporter in the Central Monitoring Room to ask people to state their appearance, speak clearly, provide a spelling, etc.
- Be sure that all parties state their name. It is difficult to differentiate between two male voices, for example. Especially in civil motions, it would be helpful if all parties would state their appearance each time they speak. Parties should identify themselves each time using *names* instead of “What do *you* think?” or “What is *your* response?” It would be helpful if judges address parties by their name rather than “Counsel.”
- Even though hearings are being recorded, it is still necessary to speak at a reasonable pace (especially when reading from a document) and articulate clearly. The quality of the transcript will only be as good as the quality of the recording.
- Be aware that ancillary sounds (such as rustling papers, clicking pens, etc.) near the microphones can impede the recording process.
- You are working with court reporters in the Central Monitoring Room. While all proceedings are being recorded, if the Judge says “This is off the record,” the relevant portions won’t be included in a transcript.
- To ensure you’re on the record, double-check to see if the BFL (blue light) is on. Please make sure the clerk has ample time to notify Central Monitoring Room staff to begin a recording session.

- **Microphones should never be unplugged.** Unplugging a microphone can cause problems with the sound mixer that require a service call from the audio contractor to remedy.
- **Microphones should not be moved.** The audio contractor places microphones in their designated location and balances the sound system. If microphones are moved out of place, it can cause static and feedback.
- Even if the microphones are not being used for courtroom amplification, it is still important to be by a microphone when making a record. If an attorney walks from counsel table to the bench to offer an exhibit, for example, they should return to the microphone at counsel table when they are speaking.
- When an interpreter is present, remind parties to keep the non-English portions of proceedings away from the microphones.
- If requested, Court Record Project staff will give direct feedback about the digital recording process in your courtroom. You may also listen to your own recorded proceedings to hear for yourself the quality of the recording in your courtroom.
- Sample recordings will be made available which portray examples of good digital recording conditions as well as examples of things which impede the recording and/or transcription process.
- On-going training will be offered to all internal and external clients.

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## **A QUICK-GUIDE FOR THE COURT RECORD PROJECT**

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### **HOW TO NOTIFY THE COURT RECORD PROJECT OF HEARINGS THAT REQUIRE A RECORD:**

In monitored calendars where an administrative clerk is present, there is no need for the judicial officer to notify the Court Record Project; the courtroom clerk will do so.

However, if you have a hearing scheduled in addition to your monitored calendar or are presiding over a calendar where no administrative clerk is present (SUCH AS IMPLIED CONSENTS AT THE SUBURBS or CIVIL MOTIONS), please follow these steps:

1. For civil hearings, if time allows, email the information (**case number, caption and appearances as well as the time, date and location of the hearing**) in advance to the 4<sup>th</sup> Court Record Project email group. Otherwise call us in advance with the information at 612-596-2873.
  2. Please call Central Monitoring before the hearing to go on the record: 612-596-2873.
  3. Please call Central Monitoring when the hearing ends to go off the record: 612-596-2873.
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**If your message is time-sensitive, please be sure to speak to someone in person versus leaving a message on voicemail or e-mail!**

**COURTROOMS WIRED WITH DIGITAL RECORDING EQUIPMENT:**

Government Center: A1734, A1751, C1156, C1159, C655, C857, C1053, C1357, C1655, C1859

Family Justice Center: 132, 133, 134, 434, 435, 535, 543, 630, 637

Juvenile Justice Center: 2 and 2A (detentions)

All courtrooms at the Public Safety Facility, Division II, Division III and Division IV.

**HOURS OF OPERATION:**

The Court Record Project will staff the Central Monitoring Room Monday through Friday, 7:30 a.m. through 5:00 p.m. If you need assistance outside of these hours, arrangements must be made in advance with the Court Record Coordinator.

**COMMUNICATION WITH COURT RECORD PROJECT STAFF AND COURT REPORTERS IN THE CENTRAL MONITORING ROOM:**

Any questions or concerns regarding the Court Record Project may be directed to the Court Record Coordinator. This office processes transcript requests, arranges training and schedules tours of the Central Monitoring Room. Contact her at 612-596-2870 or at [Tamara.Halonen@courts.state.mn.us](mailto:Tamara.Halonen@courts.state.mn.us).

You may use the email group "4<sup>th</sup> Court Record Project" to reach permanent staff members of the Court Record Project.

In courtrooms that will be digitally recorded daily, the courtroom clerk will be aware of the name and telephone number of the court reporter in Central Monitoring who will be assigned that particular courtroom. If it is necessary to speak to that court reporter, they can be reached by phone or by the CourtSmart Chat feature on the computer.

**COURTROOM CONTROL:**

The support and courtesies extended to court reporters in traditional situations must be extended to the court reporters in the Central Monitoring Room to enable them to make the best record possible. All parties must be familiar with the capabilities and limitations of the digital recording system so proceedings are conducted in a manner that contributes to obtaining a complete and accurate record.

**An important point to remember is that the court reporter monitoring your courtroom is also monitoring several other courtrooms. While multiple courtrooms may be *viewed* simultaneously on the monitor, it is only possible to *listen* to one courtroom at a time. It is never safe to assume that a court reporter is listening to your proceedings in real time.**

The judicial officer controls the courtroom and can direct the proceedings in a manner that enhances the recording process, or risk losing portions of the record. When people speak simultaneously or rapidly, it is difficult to record clearly. If this occurs, the judicial officer

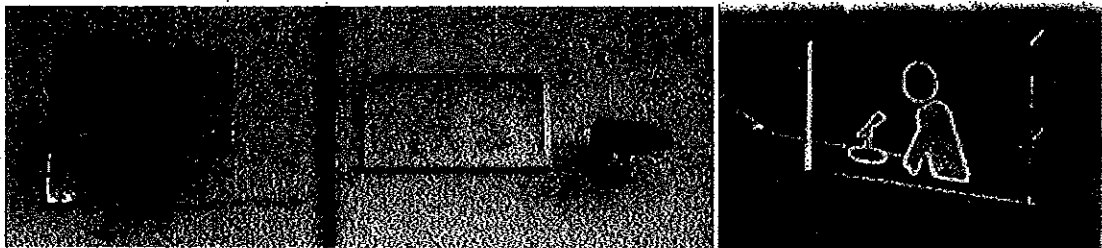
should have the information restated for the record. If a party nods or gestures in response to a question, the judicial officer will need to correct the problem.

Judicial officers are asked to ensure that parties speak directly into the microphones without interrupting one another. This especially applies to parties who may address the Court without approaching a microphone.

### **RELEVANT EQUIPMENT IN THE COURTROOM:**

**CAMERA:** The video from the camera is closed-circuit only which means that video is neither recorded nor saved. The quality of the video feed to the Central Monitoring Room is such that a court reporter may not be able to identify parties. Therefore it is vital that parties identify themselves before speaking.

**BFL PANEL:** If you are being actively recorded, the BFL should be a steady bright blue. If the BFL remains clear, proceedings are not being monitored or recorded. If the BFL is blinking, the recording has been paused or there is a malfunction and no audio is being received by the recording system.



Left to right: Assisted-listening device panel (unrelated to recording system), unlit BFL, camera, lit BFL.)

**MICROPHONES:** The audio system serves two purposes: 1) courtroom amplification; and 2) providing audio to the recording system. If a microphone is not needed for courtroom amplification, it should be muted using the mute button. Microphones should never be disconnected. It is important to note that muting a microphone will not necessarily mute sound to the digital recording system.

**COURTSMART:** Software has been installed on the courtroom computer located at the clerk's desk, including CourtSmart Chat which is an instant-message system. A barcode scanner is installed on the computer for use by the clerk.